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Letter dated 26 July 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to write to you and, through you, to draw the attention of the Security Council to the recent developments in the conflict resolution process in Abkhazia, Georgia, and to highlight some of the changes and achievements that have taken place in Georgia under the new Government, particularly as they relate to the peace process. Some of them are reflected in the Secretary-General's report.

Above all, we would like to reiterate that Georgia is committed to the peaceful resolution of the frozen conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, despite what one might hear regarding the alleged aggressiveness of the new Government. Let me underline that there is no single member of the new Government who advocates violence. It is only through peaceful, negotiated means that we envision the resolution of the conflict.

We have begun and have achieved considerable success in realistically fighting corruption and organized crime in Georgia, a task that some time ago seemed insurmountable. We took the fight with criminals all across the country, but I would particularly like to highlight the achievements as they relate to Abkhazia, Georgia:

- We have disarmed and neutralized illegal armed formations, which had no connection either to the Government or to internally displaced persons.
- We have detained several criminal groups which operated in western Georgia, particularly in the Samegrelo and Svaneti regions — areas adjacent to Abkhazia — and which were involved in kidnappings, including the abduction of UNOMIG personnel.

We have to reiterate our regret that the investigation of the shooting down of the UNOMIG helicopter is being carried out only partially. Despite our and UNOMIG's countless requests, the Abkhaz separatist leadership are refusing to allow the investigation to be carried out in the territory under their control — it does seem that they do have something to conceal.

Let me restate that we have begun a relentless fight against anyone who chooses a criminal path. In this context, we cannot but commend and support the introduction of the civilian police component in Gali district. However, unfortunately, the Abkhaz separatist authorities are continuing to obstruct the unit's full deployment.

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More than four years have elapsed since the agreement and support by the Group of Friends of the so-called Boden document on the basic principles of distribution of competences between Tbilisi and Sokhumi. The Russian Federation, as a special facilitator, has been trying to transmit the paper to the Abkhaz side but without much success. We still hope that with increased and more persistent involvement of our Russian colleagues we will be able to begin meaningful deliberations on the political status of Abkhaz, based on the above-mentioned document.

We are actively participating in the Geneva process and rest much hope on its successful development. Unfortunately, the Abkhaz side refused to participate in the last meeting. We believe this decision should be most alarming and unacceptable for all parties involved in the resolution of the conflict. The Security Council and the entire international community should pay more attention to the unconstructive position of the Abkhaz side.

In this regard, the upcoming elections for de facto president of the separatist regime may bring some new elements to the peace process. While these elections are clearly illegal and illegitimate, we still hope that the new leadership of the secessionists may take more constructive and responsible positions. Here I have to recall the idea which was considered previously in recent years — the Security Council's visit to Abkhazia, Georgia. It might be exactly the right time to learn the reality on the spot and demonstrate to the new leadership of the separatists the will and vision of the international community.

Unfortunately, we still continue to witness processes which can hardly be considered as aimed at a peaceful resolution of conflicts in Georgia. The visa-free regime on the Abkhaz and former South Ossetian segments of the Georgian-Russian State border is still enforced; granting of Russian citizenship to the population of the separatist regions is practically completed; illegal acquisition of land and property in Abkhazia, Georgia, still continues; training of the representatives of Abkhaz separatists in military schools of the Russian Federation is still taking place; the issue of the military base in Gudauta is still unresolved; and from time to time hundreds of armed mercenaries are entering Georgian territory from Russia to conduct so-called "joint manoeuvres".

Here, I have to turn to the problem which was the subject of thorough discussion during recent months — the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. We highly welcome putting this issue at the front line of the peace process. But the discussions have been going on for years and years, while these human beings are still deprived of their right to return to their homes. In fact, again, if the Council decides to visit Georgia, you will see with your own eyes hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who are overwhelmed with the feeling that they have been left behind and forgotten, people who are deprived of their basic right, the right to live in their own homes, speak and raise their children in their native language, and pursue happiness under secure and dignified conditions. There must be an end in sight for the troubles of these people.

We do believe that the way out of this situation lies through the unified and resolute Security Council, capable of taking decisive actions. The Security Council should utilize all resources to ensure progress in the peace process, in particular the return of the refugees and internally displaced persons, political and security issues and economic cooperation.

We do believe that under the present circumstances only a firm position taken by the Security Council will finally be heeded by the Abkhaz separatists and have an impact on them.

We have all to commit ourselves not only to changing things that ought to be changed in the process of conflict resolution, but also make sure that they are balanced and lead to restoring long-awaited peace in Abkhazia, Georgia.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative